



Irwin Farmstead

Santa Rosa, California

HISTORIC RESOURCE ASSESSMENT

Prepared by
Painter Preservation & Planning
Petaluma, California

Diana Painter PhD

Prepared for
The Children's Village of Sonoma County & the City of Santa Rosa

October 2003

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SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to determine the historic significance of the Irwin Farmstead. The Irwin Farmstead has been occupied by four generations of the Irwin family, earlier settlers in southeast Santa Rosa and the first non-natives to occupy this land. The property was purchased in 1861 by Thomas Nelson Irwin and sold to The Children's Village of Sonoma County in 2003 by descendants of the Irwin family.

The farmstead occupies 2.2 acres. Thomas Nelson originally purchased a 110-acre parcel in this area, and owned as many as 272 acres here. Over time the land was sold, and in the last decade urbanization has increased rapidly in this area of Santa Rosa. It is slated for residential and commercial development in the *Santa Rosa Southeast Area Plan* of the early 1990s.

Outlines of the original 110-acre farm can still be read on the landscape. The smaller farmstead itself still 'reads' as a farm complex, displaying the functional relationships between buildings that a working farm typically displays. Some structures, such as the main barn, are now gone. This is not atypical of farms, as they evolve over time. Outdated structures are often the victim of neglect and therefore deteriorate. In the case of the Irwin farmstead, individual structures have also been altered by later tenants and vandalized.

The farmstead as a whole 'reads' much as it did originally and therefore retains some of its integrity. But the integrity of most of the individual buildings has been lost through subsequent alterations, neglect, removal and vandalism. Much of the larger farm setting has also been lost to urban development. An exception is the 1898 farmhouse, which retains its ability to convey the qualities for which it is determined significant.

The 1898 farmhouse may be eligible for the California State Register of Historical Places due to its association with the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, in this case a Victorian-era farmhouse (see p. 20 for additional detail). There is some question, however, as to whether the structure can be retained in its current location due to street improvements on Kawana Terrace.

If the structure cannot be retained in its current location, there is also the question as to whether it can be moved. It may be that the structure would not withstand a move, and this should be investigated by a professional structural engineer and/or professional mover. It may also be that the structure would not retain enough integrity to be meaningful in a new setting. This would depend on where it could be moved to, and the setting that the new location would provide. This would also have to be determined prior to deciding on the disposition of the farmhouse.

1. INTRODUCTION

A. *Purpose of Report*

This Historic Resource Assessment was requested by the City of Santa Rosa in conjunction with land use permitting for development of The Children's Village of Sonoma County. The purpose of the Assessment is to determine the historic significance of the Irwin Farmstead, which currently occupies this 2.2 acre site. This property was inventoried in a reconnaissance survey conducted in 1989. It was also discussed in the Environmental Impact Report prepared for the *Southeast Santa Rosa Area Plan (1993)* and the *Subsequent Environmental Impact Report* prepared for the Farmers Lane Extension (2003). It has not been the subject of an intensive survey in the past. This Assessment will help inform the City and others in making decisions about the future of the site.

Diana Painter of Painter Preservation & Planning undertook the evaluation of historic and architectural resources for this report. Ms. Painter is a qualified architectural historian as defined in the Code of Federal Regulations, 36 CFR Part 61. She holds a PhD in Architecture in Research and a Masters Degree in Urban Planning, and has 25 years of professional experience in urban design and historic preservation. She is listed as an architectural historian on the roster of consultants on file with the State of California Office of Historic Preservation's Northwest Information Center at Sonoma State University in Rohnert Park.

B. *Research Methodology*

Preparation of this report involved consultation with the staff of the Local History & Genealogy Collection at The Annex of the Central Sonoma County Library, the Sonoma County Assessor's Office, the Northwest Information Center at Sonoma State University in Rohnert Park, and at Sonoma State University's Charles Shulz Information Center.

General architectural references utilized include Cyril Harris's American Architecture, An Illustrated Encyclopedia and Virginia and Lee McAlester's A Field Guide to American Houses.

Specialized architectural references utilized include Bright Eastman's Guidelines for Documenting and Evaluating Historic Agricultural Properties on California's North and Central Coast and James Whitaker's Agricultural Buildings and Structures.

Contemporary local history sources included Gaye LeBaron's Santa Rosa, A Nineteenth Century Town and Santa Rosa, A Twentieth Century City and Sopheab Prom's chapter on the Irwin and McPeak families in From Pioneers to the Present.

Historical references included J. P. Munro-Fraser's History of Sonoma County including its Geology, Topography, Mountains, Valleys and Streams (1879); Robert Thompson's Resources Santa Rosa Valley, Town of Santa Rosa (1884); Thomas Gregory's History of

Sonoma County, CA (1911); Honoria Tuomey's History of Sonoma County California (1926); and Ernest Finley's History of Sonoma County, California (1937).

Original research included the following:

- Two site visits were conducted in October 2003, and photographs taken to document the site as it exists today.
- Assessor Records and interviews supplied information on building dates for the site.
- Historic photographs were consulted for historic building information.
- Historic city directories were consulted for information about previous owners and tenants.
- An interview was conducted with Martha Lawson and Craig Robinson, descendants of the original Irwin family. This interview was conducted by Lia Rowley, Claire Hobbs and Julie Walker and transcribed for use in this report in October 2003.

C. Regulatory Context

a. California State Criteria for Evaluation

There are four 'tests' for the historic significance of a property or site in the State of California. The criteria for these tests are modeled after the national Eligibility Criteria. Many local municipalities adopt the state or national criteria by reference and use them to determine whether sites and buildings are historically significant. But even if the local agency does not specifically adopt the criteria, the criteria still apply if the proposal is subject to the California Environmental Policy Act:

... a resource does not need to have been identified previously either through listing or survey to be considered significant under CEQA. In addition to assessing whether historical resources potentially impacted by a proposed project are listed or have been identified in a survey process, lead agencies have a responsibility to evaluate them against the California Register criteria prior to making a finding as to the proposed project's impacts to historical resources (PRC 21084.1, 14 CCR 15064.5(3)).

In order to be determined significant, an historical resource must meet one or more of the following four criteria:

1. It is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history, or the cultural heritage of California or the United States; or
2. It is associated with the lives of persons important to local, California, or national history; or

3. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values; or
4. It has yielded, or has the potential to yield, information important to the prehistory or history of the local area, California, or the nation (*California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Historic Resources*, p. 31).

In addition to meeting one or more of the above criteria, a property must retain enough of its integrity to convey the reasons for its significance. For example, if the property is determined to be significant for its architectural design (Criteria 3), it must retain enough of its appearance and historic character to be recognizable as an historic resource and representative of its period of significance (*California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Historic Resources*, p. 31). There are seven aspects by which integrity is evaluated: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

If a property is determined to be significant for its association with events that have made a contribution to local or regional history (Criteria 1), the property must also meet additional tests. One, the event or trends must clearly be important. For example, it or they must have made a contribution to the development of a community or of a specific industry. Two, the property must have a clear association with the event or historic trends. And three, the property must retain historic integrity; it must retain the physical features necessary to convey the aspect of history with which it is associated (*How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, p. 11).

b. Historic Resources and CEQA

A project with an effect that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an historical resource is a project that may have a significant effect on the environment. Substantial adverse change in the significance of an historic resource means physical demolition, destruction, relocation, or alteration of the resource or its immediate surroundings such that the significance of an historical resource would be materially impaired (*California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter, 2, 15064.5*).

The significance of an historical resource is materially impaired when a project:

- Demolishes or materially alters in an adverse manner those physical characteristics of an historical resource that convey its historical significance and that justify its inclusion in, or eligibility for, inclusion in the California Register of Historical Resources; or
- Demolishes or materially alters in an adverse manner those physical characteristics that account for its inclusion in a local register of historical resources pursuant to section 5020.1(k) of the Public Resources Code or its identification in an historical resources survey meeting the requirements of section 5024.1(g) of the Public Resources Code, unless the public agency reviewing the effects of the project establishes by a preponderance of evidence that the resource is not historically or culturally significant; or

- Demolishes or materially alters in an adverse manner those physical characteristics of a historical resource that convey its historical significance and that justify its eligibility for inclusion in the California Register of Historical Resources as determined by a lead agency for the purposes of CEQA (*California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Historical Resources*, p. 21).

D. Previous Surveys

a. 1978 Bennett Valley Study

The Bennett Valley Study of 1978 is the first study on record to note the presence of historic resources in this area. It notes that several properties are local landmarks, including Taylor Mountain. This is the only landmark noted on Kawana Springs Road, which forms the northern boundary of the study's planning area.

b. 1989-90 Santa Rosa Survey

The following structures along Kawana Terrace were inventoried in 1989: 1388, 1736, 2001 and 2001 Kawana Springs Road. The latter two are addressed incorrectly. One of these properties is 1333 Kawana Springs Road. The properties in this survey were not surveyed in depth, and no statement as to their significance was made.

c. 1993 Southeast Area Plan Cultural Resources Report

1. Historic Resources

The Irwin Farm was noted as a historic resource on Kawana Terrace when the street was surveyed in the cultural resources report for the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Santa Rosa Southeast Area Plan in 1993. This study noted that Thomas Nelson Irwin was one of the earliest individuals to settle in this area in 1861. It relayed that Thomas planted vineyards and orchards with his son William. Historic maps surveyed for that report revealed that Thomas Irwin's original 112 acres remained in the hands of the family as late as 1934 (*EIP, 1993, p. 3.1.9-14*). Mrs. Elizabeth Robinson was interviewed for this study. She stated in this interview that the house at 1333 was built in 1898, and that the house at 1321 was built around 1945.

John Shakelford Taylor's property is the second resource surveyed in this report. His property is discussed in depth, as he was one of the largest land owners in Santa Rosa and used his property in southeast Santa Rosa for a resort, race track, a ranch and dairy farm, vineyards, orchards, and coal mining. He was also instrumental in developing the race track at the fairgrounds. He still lived on the property in the memory of Martha Lawson, Elizabeth Robinson's daughter (*Note: It is more likely that his daughter Zana Weaver and her husband Eugene were the descendents Mrs. Lawson remembers. See Gaye LeBaron's article dated June 18, 2000*). Several structures still remain from the original resort and ranch.

William Manion, whose property was located across the street from the Irwin Farm on the 1877 map of Santa Rosa, is also mentioned in the EIP report. It is noted that he

bought 250 acres in 1873. He died in 1887, but his wife Elizabeth maintained 110 acres of the land until at least 1908. The study notes no structures on the property.

Lastly, historic structures are noted at 980 (colonial revival), 1388 (bungalow) and 1736 (bungalow) Kawana Springs Road. The study also notes that these structures were listed on the Santa Rosa Historic Properties Inventory of 1990.

2. Impacts to Historic Resources

The 1993 EIR states that:

The Southeast Santa Rosa Area Plan anticipates development within the 640 acres under consideration. Plan area historical research and field reconnaissance of portions of the area have revealed that potentials exist for development projects resulting in significant impacts to potentially important cultural resources (p. 3.1.9-22).

The report noted that “research reveals that at least two pre-1946 properties that are located in the Plan area, appear to qualify as important historic resources. One is the 1898 Irwin family Italianate-style farm house at 1333 Kawana Springs Road and the other is the Weaver home located at 2100 Kawana Springs Road.” The proposed mitigation states that these resources should be reviewed as part of future development plan considerations and environmental review processes, and that “mitigation would include avoidance, relocation or selective re-use.” This author continues:

Although the 1898 Irwin house is presently in a state of disrepair, it appears to be in good enough condition that renovation and preservation should be considered. As the property is directly linked to one of the earliest settlers in Southeast Santa Rosa, it appears that it would meet the CEQA criteria for association with a person that is significant in regional/California history. Also, interest in local community history would be enhanced by the preservation of the house, further meeting CEQA criteria for importance determination. Restoration and preservation of this house could be augmented by use as a community facility in association with open space or parkland in the Plan area (EIP, 1993, p. 3.1.9-25).

Mitigation established in this study for affected properties included:

- avoidance of historical properties and preservation in their present location;
- relocation of historical structures to locations where they might be preserved;
- development of an Historic American Building Survey for the structures, if other mitigation measures cannot be implemented and the properties might be damaged or destroyed; and
- Salvage and selective re-use of building features once the survey is completed.

d. 2003 Farmers Lane Extension Cultural Resources Report

The 2003 Farmers Lane Extension Subsequent EIR cultural resource report also mentions Thomas Nelson Irwin as being one of the earliest individuals to settle in this area. Note is made of the Irwin house and orchard in early maps, and the 1898 two-story Italianate residence located there now. No further discussion is made of the Irwin property, as it was not directly affected by the project.

2. PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

A. Location

This 2.2 acre property is located east of Petaluma Hill Road on what is now called Kawana Terrace in southeast Santa Rosa, Sonoma County (*see Figure 1*). This road was previously known as Kawana Springs Road, and the general area was known as Kawana Springs, formerly called White Sulfur Springs. The two addresses for the property are 1321 Kawana Terrace and 1333 Kawana Terrace (historically, 1321 and 1333 Kawana Springs Road). The parcel number is 044-370-005 (*see Figure 2*).

The property represents what remains of an original dairy farm, first settled by the Irwin family in 1861 and occupied by their descendents until very recently. This remaining parcel is the current and historical location of the main structures for the farm, as well as the major landscape features. Most of the major buildings remain, although they are in varying physical condition.

B. Land Use and Structures

The structures on the site are not inhabited at this time. There are two houses from 1951 and 1898 that are now boarded up. Other structures on the site include the original milking parlor and related structures, the chicken coop, a machine shop/garage, a pump house, a dog run and cook house, and various storage and outbuildings. Historical structures that are now gone include the original barn (the foundation remains) and original 1860s house (the original cookhouse remains). Some of the auxiliary farm structures (fences, corrals) are now gone, but some remain, including a large trough. Much of the original landscaping remains. The seasonal creek that ran east-west on the north edge of the farm site remains, although extensive grading and clearing in the area has no doubt changed drainage patterns.

C. Surrounding Land Uses

The Irwin Farmstead is located in the Kawana Springs area of southeast Santa Rosa, south and west of Bennett Valley. The property sits on the valley floor, but the terrain changes quickly to rolling hills with oak trees to the east. Taylor Mountain and Sonoma Mountain, beyond, are local landmarks. The historic White Sulfur Springs Resort, owned by noted local landowner and businessman, John Shackleford Taylor, was located at the end of the road. This is the hot springs that the area is named after.

Land in this area was originally purchased in large parcels for farming, ranching and mining purposes. Today the subject site is nearly surrounded by new and planned development, as part of the City of Santa Rosa Southeast Area. Densely sited new single and multi-family structures exist to the west and north of the site. The property to the east is currently being graded for new development. Land in this area is designated for low, medium low, and medium residential development in Santa Rosa's General Plan.

Along Kawana Terrace to the south, however, are many original farmhouses and what is left of the original acreages. This area is still within Sonoma County. Until recently several families that were descendents of the original or early settlers in the area lived on the street, according to a neighbor. This is consistent with the Irwin family's story and Martha Lawson's account of families along the street when she was growing up (*interview, October 2003*).

D. Natural Environment

The subject property is located on the valley floor, in an area known for its flat terrain. Kawana Springs Creek, also called Colgan Creek, runs east-west along the north side of the site, eventually draining into Santa Rosa Creek. The topography quickly changes east of the site, however, as the terrain rises to the Sonoma Mountains. The fourteen hundred foot high Taylor Mountain dominates views here. Scattered oaks are located in the lower portions of the hills bordering the site, while the upper reaches are characterized by oak woodland (*EIP, 1988, p. 6*).

3. HISTORIC CONTEXT

A. Agriculture in Early Sonoma County

In the early 1850s, once gold mining lost its luster, many miners purchased land in the Santa Rosa area and returned to their former occupations as farmers and ranchers (*EIP*, 1993, p. 3.1.9-13). Early ranchers raised beef cattle. Later sheep became popular, their wool processed by Santa Rosa Woolen Mills. During the 1860s and 1870s, dairy production gained in importance: "The production of butter, cheese and milk would create a dairy industry that prospered well into the twentieth century" (*LeBaron*, 1985, *quoted in the above*). The following trends were noted in southeast Santa Rosa:

Bowers' map of Sonoma County shows that all the land within the Southeast Santa Rosa Plan area was sold by 1867. The historical record indicates that by 1880 the 2,226 farms which existed in the County averaged 309 acres in size; ten years later the 2,886 farms average 245 acres (EIP, 1993, p. 3.1.9-14).

B. Settlement of Bennett Valley and Kawana Springs

The Irwin Farmstead is located in the northwest corner of Bennett Valley, as defined in the 1978 Bennett Valley Study. In fact, the farm is located just north of the northern boundary of the study area. Even though the site is not within this study area, the land use trends and historical studies noted in this study do provide a context for development of the Irwin farm.

Bennett Valley was settled in the 1850s, primarily by farmers and ranchers. In the mid-1880s grapes, apples and other fruit, and hay, wheat and other grains were grown there. According to historian Robert Thompson, writing in 1884, this 15,000 acre area was also used to raise 400 horses, 1,000 head of cattle, 4,000 sheep, and 2,000 hogs (*Van Loon, quoting Thompson, p. i*). Vineyards dominated the landscape until the 1890s, when the grapes were destroyed by phylloxera. At that point in time, raising cattle for meat and dairy products became popular. John Taylor was the largest landowner (1,400 acres) and most diversified in terms of the products his land produced.

Landmarks noted in this study (compiled by David Irwin and Judy Schwartzman) include Taylor Mountain, the 1,400 foot peak that still dominates the landscape to the east of the Irwin Farmstead. Taylor Mountain was named after John Taylor. Taylor's land was located at the end of Kawana Springs Road, but originally abutted Irwin's land. He deserves special mention for being the major land owner in this area, proprietor of White Sulfur Springs, and a well known figure in Santa Rosa history. White Sulfur Springs was eventually renamed by Luther Burbank, at the request of Taylor, to Kawana Springs (*Hanson, p. 133*).

C. The Irwin Family

a. The First Generation

Thomas Nelson Irwin, who originally settled the property at 1333 Kawana Springs, came to California in 1850, as did many gold-seeking Americans. Family member Martha Lawson notes that Thomas traveled by wagon train overland to the west in 1949 (*interview, October 2003*). He came to California to try his luck in Plumas County mines, but had arrived in Sonoma County by 1952. Shortly thereafter he met and married Mary Ann McPeak (*EIP, 1993, p. 3.1.9-14*).

Irwin was born in Tennessee on July 5, 1829. Mary Ann McPeak was born on April 30, 1832 in Missouri. Mary Ann, the daughter of Matthew and Mary A. (Powell) McPeak, also came to California via the overland route, by ox team. She traveled with her parents in 1852 and settled with them in Sonoma County (*Tuomey, p. 315*).

Thomas Irwin lost his claim to 160 acres in the Joaquin Corrilos [sic] land grant in 1860, and returned to the mines for just one season (*Tuomey, p. 315*). When he returned to Santa Rosa in 1861 he briefly farmed the McPeak place, then purchased 112 acres of government land two miles south of town, the site of the present Irwin Farmstead. In 1879 he bought the old McPeak place, increasing his holdings to 172 acres. Robert Irwin lived on a small parcel on Petaluma Hill Road, which may explain why the Thompson's 1877 map of Santa Rosa showed an "R. Irvin" [sic] owning 110 acres at Petaluma Hill Road and Kawana Terrace Road.

Historian Tom Gregory writes in 1911 that the Irwins had six children, five sons and one daughter. He notes at that time that three of the sons lived near Sebastopol, and a son and daughter still lived at home (*Gregory, p. 925*). Martha Lawson reported that their children's names were Melinda, William, George, Robert and Thomas. Irwin died in 1898, and his wife died in 1907.

Mrs. T. N. Irwin was an early member of the First Baptist Church in Santa Rosa and Mr. Irwin served as deacon (*Gaston, p. 25*).

b. William Irwin

Thomas' son William attended Pacific College (*note: this may be Pacific Methodist College of Santa Rosa, which was established in 1870*), and eventually took over the family farm. William Matthew Irwin was born October 25, 1855 in Sebastopol, Sonoma County. He married Hattie W. Wedde, who was born December 21, 1873 in San Francisco, on September 18, 1895 (*Prom, p. 17*). She was the daughter of Henry and Johanna (Wagner) Wedde, who had immigrated from Germany about 1860 and settled in San Francisco in 1862 (*Tuomey, p. 315*).

William and Hattie had four children: Will Nelson, born September 11, 1896; Edna, born August 13, 1899; Minnie Alma, born April 11, 1904; and George W. Irwin, born February 18, 1906. Edna Irwin married David P. Farner of Sonoma County on May 14, 1919. Minnie A. Irwin married Harold W. Trine on May 14, 1923 and made her home in Guerneville.

William established a separate home after his marriage, but continued to farm with his father. He inherited 52 acres upon his father's death in 1898, which he farmed with his sons Will and George B. Irwin (*note: the 1905 and 1913 directories also list a John W. Irwin at William's address*). Tuomey's 1926 history notes that, in addition to general farming, he had fifteen acres of vineyard and orchard.

William Irwin died February 28, 1937. Tuomey noted in 1926 that he is "one of the best known agriculturalists of Sonoma County" (*Tuomey, p. 315*). He was a Santa Rosa Parlor No. 28 member of the Native Sons of the Golden West (*Finley, p. 452*). The 1947 Santa Rosa directory notes that Hattie Wedde retired to 725 Mill Street in Santa Rosa (*MacKay, 1947*).

c. George Irwin*

George Irwin was born on the family farm in 1873 (*Gregory, p. 925*). He assumed management of the home ranch after his school days. Gregory reports in 1911 that he had fifty acres in grain and several head of cattle for his own use. He also notes that George was planning to develop a dairy herd and make this his primary business. He was evidently successful in this goal, as Martha Lawson reports that at its peak the dairy farm had 200 milking cows, mostly Jersey with a few Holstein.

George Irwin married Anita Jones, known as Nettie, in 1901. She was the daughter of Lewis D. and Martha J. (Orender) Jones of Ukiah, Mendocino County. Gregory notes in 1911 that they had one daughter, Ruth Agnes. Martha Lawson reported that the other children's names were Elizabeth and Floyd. Ruth died in 1811 of tetanus, and Floyd died in Okinawa at the end of World War II in 1945. After Floyd's death, George Irwin leased out the farm, according to Ms. Lawson.

It appears that George lived at the house at 1333 until his death, although in 1947 a James and Floyd are also listed at the address. George is listed as "retired" at 1333 Kawana Springs Road beginning in 1964. Anita is listed as a widow beginning in 1967. According to these same records, she lived at 1333 Kawana Springs Road until 1983.

George and Anita Irwin were members of the Santa Rosa Baptist Church and George Irwin served on two school boards in 1910. He was also a Democrat (*Gregory, p. 920*).

Will N. Irwin graduated from Analy Union High School and also worked the family farm. William N. Irwin and Mrs. R. N. Irwin are noted as living at 295 Irwin Lane in Santa Rosa beginning in 1947.

(* *Note: George (b. 1873) is noted as a younger brother of William Irwin, but William Irwin also had a son George (b. 1906). The George Irwin discussed here appears to be a younger brother of William.*)

d. The Fourth Generation

Elizabeth married Richard A. Robinson and had two children, Craig Robinson and Martha Lawson. Richard and Elizabeth Robinson moved to the farm in 1950, according

to Ms. Lawson. Directories show that they lived at the newer house, at 1321 Kawana Springs Road, which assessor records show as being built in 1951. The children left around the mid-1960s.

According to the directories, Richard worked as a mechanic and machinist at E. C. Kraft & Co. from 1957 to 1968. In 1969 he worked at Mare Island, apparently until his retirement about 1973. Beginning in 1985 Elizabeth Robinson is listed as retired at the same address.

Elizabeth Robinson was interviewed in 1993 in conjunction with the *Santa Rosa Southeast Area Plan* cultural resources report. Martha Lawson and Craig Robinson were interviewed for this assessment by Lia Rowley, Claire Hobbs and Julie Walker. Her comments appear as noted.

The Irwins were the first non-native settlers on this land, and they owned it from 1861 to 2003. The footprint of the original 112-acre parcel can be easily seen from Thompson's map of 1877 to the aerial photo, circa 1990, in Figure 4. Even as this area develops into an urban landscape, some of the features that mark the previous farmed landscape will remain embedded in property lines and natural features.

4. ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

A. Physical Context

Farms are typically considered “districts” within rural landscapes. The National Park Service defines a Rural Historic Landscape as follows:

A geographical area that historically has been used by people, or shaped or modified by human activity, occupancy, or intervention, and that possesses a significant concentration, linkage or continuity of areas of land use, vegetation, buildings and structures, roads and waterways, and natural features (National Register Bulletin 30).

These districts are not static, however. An agricultural landscape both within and beyond the farmstead changes and evolves. Crops change for a variety of reasons, and the buildings and spaces change with them, accommodating new equipment and new technologies. To explore a farm as a physical artifact involves essentially treating the farm as a working landscape.

The land surrounding a farm and within a farmstead are both important in considering the integrity of a farm landscape. The farm itself, the landscape, has an important working relationship to the structures and internal spaces of the farmstead. The spaces between the buildings within the farmstead are also work spaces, lending clues as to why the structures and landscape features are located where they are, and how the buildings and spaces work together.

Today the Irwin Farmstead consists of 2.2 acres, which comprises most of the original site of the houses, dairy operation, barns, other outbuildings, and major landscape features. The larger setting of the farm, which would have lent clues as to how the farm utilized the surrounding land, is largely gone, but the interior landscape remains.

Looking at the 1877 historic map of Santa Rosa, it appears that the farmstead occupied the southwest corner of the 110 acres owned by the Irwin family at that time. This same 110-acre parcel is bounded by the following streets today: Kawana Terrace to the south; Petaluma Hill Road to the west; the property line just north of Santa Ana Drive to the north; and the east property line of the Irwin farmstead to the east. This was also the west property line of John Taylor’s property at that time.

This same footprint can be clearly seen in Figure 4, an undated aerial photograph circa 1990 (source: *Sonoma County History Annex*). In this photograph the northern portion of that original parcel is developed into an urban landscape, but the farmstead can clearly be seen in relationship to the surrounding open land, the creek, and the trees that lined the creek bed. Across the street, similar to today, are smaller farms with orchards and open land, transitioning to oak studded hillsides to the east.

Today, as previously discussed, the immediate context of the Irwin Farmstead is largely gone, with the exception of the small farms and acreages to the south of Kawana Terrace. It is still possible to see the creek bed, but much of the landscaping has disappeared as surrounding development encroached on what had been open land.

B. Architectural Description

1. The 1898 House

Mrs. Elizabeth Robinson, the mother of Martha Lawson, reported in an interview in 1993 that the Victorian farmhouse on the site was built in 1898 (EIP, 1993, 3.1.9). According to Assessor records it was built in 1909. It is a Victorian-era vernacular farmhouse with Italianate influences.

The two-story house faces onto Kawana Terrace. The main entry drive is to the east, immediately beside the house. It is of wood frame construction, probably redwood, with drop siding, vertical corner boards, and a composite roof. It is partially set on a foundation made up of quarried stone and cast concrete piers, about one-and-one half feet above the ground. The front steps leading to the house are missing.

The L-shaped structure features a wrap-around porch on the south and west side, a front-facing gable roof, and a side gable at the rear, facing west. A third, asymmetrically placed gable is located at the rear of the house, facing north, above a one-story extension. Extending to the north from this one-story element is what appears to be a small addition to the rear with a shed roof, possibly a utility room. A second addition has been added to this, to the west. It also has a shed roof. Deep gable returns with double brackets exist on all gables. A wrap-around porch on an 1890s – 1900 residential structure is often associated with Queen Anne influences, but this structure exhibits no additional details that would associate it with this period in Victorian architecture.

The main body of the house is narrow (18 feet wide) and symmetrical. A central entry is flanked by two one-over-one light double-hung windows. The second story features two double-hung windows as well, placed directly above the windows on the first floor. At the attic level is a rectangular vent placed under the gable. The roof of the porch, between the first and second stories, is nearly flat.

The side elevations of the main body of the house also feature one-over-one light double-hung windows, placed at north end of the east and west façades. All windows and doors feature wide, molded trim where it has not been removed. The window sash has been replaced with aluminum frame on the upper story in front. Other windows retain their wood frames. A metal plate is affixed to the wall above the second story window to the west.

The lintels further extend the line of the tall, narrow windows on the structure to the frieze band. Moldings are elaborate for a house of this type, and constitute one of the character-defining features of the structure. Other character-defining features include the square posts around the porch (one is missing), with their wood bases and capitals of

wood molding. Above the capitals are narrow brackets that extend to the soffits of the porch. These brackets are repeated under the gable roofs throughout. Boxed eaves finish the porch and roof.

The house was reportedly damaged in the 1969 earthquake. The Assessor's Report in 1973 noted that the house had shifted on its foundation stones, which may explain why it is partially sitting on concrete piers today. This report also notes that the house "will probably be demolished when the occupant (owner's other) passed [sic] away." It also notes that there is salvage value to "good old woodwork, etc." (*Assessor Records, 1973*).

2. The 1951 House

The newer house on the site was built in 1951, according to Assessor records. It is an L-shaped, one-story, wood frame house with gable roofs and an attached, covered carport on the east side. The 'square' footprint of the house is roughly 30' by 30'. A covered entry and patio area is located on the west side of the house. The front portion of the structure was added in 1960, according to Martha Lawson (*interview, October 2003*). Several other additions and alterations to the structure exist, undermining its architectural integrity. It was reportedly damaged in the 1969 earthquake (*Assessor Records, 1973*).

3. The Milking Parlor

The Milking Parlor has been added to over time (essentially, what were separate buildings were connected with additions and a covered breezeway). Some portions of the structure are in poor condition, but the interior retains the features that indicate how the structure was used. Cows entered the north end of the structure, which is a series of sheds clad in metal and other various materials today. The central portion contains the milking parlor, which features a wood stanchion in the center along the length of the building, a molded-concrete feed trough along one side, to the west, and the milking area along the other side, to the east. The structure has a concrete slab floor and formed concrete walls. To the south is a concrete milk processing room. A narrow hall with concrete stairs (function unknown) separates the two. Pipes and meters in this hallway show how milk was piped from the milking area to the processing room.

Other interior rooms exist in this barn complex, and it is not clear what they were used for. Overall, the structure is in poor condition. The main function of the barn as a milking parlor, however, is still apparent.

4. The Machine Shed

The machine shed was also a structure that was added later, perhaps in conjunction with the 1951 house. It is located to the rear of this house. Richard Robinson, who occupied the 1951 house most of his adult life, was a mechanic and machinist, and this shop appears to be associated with his house.

The shop is essentially made up of three parts. The portion of the building that faces the rear of the 1951 house features two large openings which lead to a dirt-floored work area. Doors to the rear of this area lead to a large second room. In the back is an open porch.

This structure is rectangular in shape, oriented east-west on the site. It features a shed roof, wood-frame construction and wood siding. It is in fair condition.

5. The Pump House

The pump house is directly west of the 1951 house. Its dimensions are 7' by 8'. In an interview with Martha Lawson she said that part of this building was an original outhouse. It does appear as though the structure was modified over time, as it displays two different types of wood siding. It is a wood frame structure on concrete piers with a corrugated metal roof and an east-west oriented gable roof. It is in good condition.

6. The Cook Shack and Dog Run

The "Cook Shack" is a small, gable-roofed structure behind and to the west of the 1898 house. According to Martha Lawson, the structure was originally a cooking area for the first house on the site, which was located here, between the existing 1898 house and the 1951 house. It opens onto a narrow passage on the west side of the structure. In later years it was used for storage. It is a wood-sided structure with an asphalt shingle roof, which was probably added later. It is in poor condition.

The Dog Run is an open structure just to the west of the Cook Shack. It was added by later tenants. It is a wood-frame structure with plywood siding and a corrugated aluminum shed roof. It is in poor condition. It opens to the rear of the site, to the north. The narrow passageway is located between the Cook Shack and Dog Run, leading to the Chicken Coop and rear of the farmstead.

7. The Chicken Coop

The chicken coop is a small structure to the north of the house, and may be a part of the original farmstead. It is a small, gable-roofed structure, its door facing south, towards the 1898 house. The chicken coop is made up of sawn vertical Redwood boards, about one-and-one-half feet wide and approximately three-quarters of an inch thick. There is no wood framing. Small rafters, narrowly placed, extend from the plate at the top of the walls to the roof ridge. Above this can be seen the original shingles. A corrugated aluminum roof now covers the wood shingle roof. It is in good condition, despite being grown over with vegetation.

8. Landscape Features

Typically farm landscapes are in a state of continual evolution, and the Irwin Farmstead landscape is no exception. The foundation of the original barn appears at the rear of the farmstead, west of the milking parlor and south of the creek. It appears that portions of the barn had a dirt floor and portions were built on a concrete slab. The barn roof can be seen in aerial photos as recently as the photo in Figure 4. Other features that recall the original function of the farmstead include the concrete watering trough in front of the milking parlor.

The only remaining trace of the circa 1860s farmhouse is the "Cook Shack," located to the rear of the 1898 house. Martha Lawson reported that the 1860s house was located between the 1898 house and the large oak tree which has since died.

Like many farm sites, the Irwin Farmstead is marked by specimen trees and other landscaping. Trees and shrubs that were planted as a part of the newer 1951 house in particular still exist, although a number of mature trees (olive, oak) also exist around the older farmhouse. The large oak in the center of the complex has recently died.

C. Architectural Significance

a. The Farmstead

The Irwin Farmstead was associated with the Irwin family, the first non-natives to occupy the land. They held this land for approximately 140 years, and four generations of the family lived in the total of three houses that have existed on the site (there are now two). In the interview with descendent Martha Lawson in October 2003 she recounted portions of the farm that had been sold over the years. Thomas Nelson Irwin owned as many as 272 acres of farmland here in the 1800s. Today the farmstead occupies a 2.2 acre parcel.

The main holdings of the farm are in evidence from the 1877 historic map of Santa Rosa to the present, although the farmstead itself will soon be surrounded by new development. The land around the farm was re-zoned in conjunction with Santa Rosa's Southeast Area Plan of the early 1990s for low, medium low, and medium density residential housing. Note that properties to the south of Kawana Terrace are still in Sonoma County.

The farmstead continues to convey its history as the center of the Irwin farm. The relationship of the farmstead to the original property line is intact, in the sense that the structures occupied the southeast corner of the farm, north of Kawana Terrace. It maintains its relationship to the street, although the streets have been reconfigured further east, and renamed. Kawana Terrace will soon be widened and improved to an urban level, further changing its relationship to original farm.

The complex also 'reads' as a farm site. Houses face the street and are surrounded by specimen trees even today. Separate drives lead from the street, serving the separate houses of the extended family in their time. The rear 'working' area of the farm is in the rear, and the functional relationships between the structures can be read even today, when the main barn and corrals are gone.

This being said, the integrity of the larger farmstead has been severely compromised. Several of the structures have been allowed to deteriorate and collapse. Some have been demolished. The larger setting has also been compromised. While the farmstead itself retains its integrity in the relationships between the buildings and between the buildings and the immediate landscape, the larger setting has been altered by subsequent development.

b. The Farmhouses

Victorian-era vernacular farmhouses were once a common feature in Sonoma County, but are increasingly rare in their original setting as the County develops into a more urban

environment. Victorian vernacular farmhouses, also known as “folk Victorian,” may feature variously Gothic influences, Greek Revival influences, and/or Italianate influences, depending on when they were built and the desires of the architect, builder or client.

Architectural historian Anne Bloomfield, who conducted the 1989 architectural survey of Santa Rosa, notes in her discussion of Santa Rosa houses that, “Italianate houses with tall, narrow windows, horizontal rustic siding, and classically derived moldings appear to have been built at least as late as 1900,” which would be consistent with the estimated dates for this house (*Bloomfield, p. 8*). She observes that in Santa Rosa, many farmhouses have been engulfed by post-World War II growth and are today surrounded by newer housing tracts.

She discusses the architectural significance of these now-isolated farm structures as follows:

‘The farmhouse in the tract’ is significant because it shows in a physical way the use of the land before its modern development. If there is an associated barn or water tank house, that illustrates some of the farers’ living conditions: animal stalls and isolation from city services. The fact that a great number of modern tract houses surround a single farmhouse demonstrates the size of the productive farmland that used to be associated with the house. No other existing property type demonstrates this so well to city dwellers. A farmhouse may have significance under Criterion A, events (for development patterns of farm into tract) . . . (Bloomfield, p. 14).

Ms. Bloomfield established criteria by which a farmhouse may be considered historically significant:

To be eligible for the National Register, a surviving farmhouse should show its origins clearly by its own style and by the existence of at least one other associated agricultural remnant, such as a water tank house or a barn. It should contrast obviously with its modern surroundings. It should possess its own original stylistic elements, including roof shape, siding, fenestration, and details. It may have additions, if they do not conceal or transform the main house. If it is significant for a person, that person must have lived in it, and it must look similar to its appearance at that time (Bloomfield, p. 14).

Subsequent surveys addressing the 1898 farmhouse (1993, 2003) have stated that the structure has historic significance and is potentially eligible for the California Register under Criteria 1. While the farmhouse today has been vandalized and some of its wood trim removed (both inside and outside), it retains its architectural integrity.

The 1951 farmhouse is not of architectural interest. It has apparently been added to over time, and the overall form of the wood-frame structure is no longer apparent.

D. Application of Eligibility Criteria

In order to be determined significant, an historical resource must meet one or more of the following four criteria, as previously noted (*California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Historic Resources*, p. 31). In addition, a historic resource must meet the tests of integrity discussed in the first section of this report. The following is a discussion of the Irwin Farmstead with respect to each of the California Register Criteria of Eligibility.

1. *It is associated with events or patterns of events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history and cultural heritage of California or the United States.*

Architectural historian Anne Bloomfield has established a context statement for farmhouses and farmsteads in Santa Rosa by which the value of a farm or farmstead as an historic resource might be evaluated (see Section C, above). The Irwin Farmstead clearly reads as a farmstead, as most of the structures and the working spaces between them are intact. Most remaining individual structures, however, are severely compromised in their integrity, in addition to being in poor condition. So while the farmstead today (including some property lines) can be regarded as a historic resource for its association with the agricultural development of southeast Santa Rosa and Santa Rosa as a whole, its integrity, defined as a function of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association, is no longer intact.

2. *It is associated with the lives of persons important to the nation or to California's past.*

Four generations of the Irwin family, whose descendants live in the Bay Area today, lived on this farm and have very fond memories of it, judging by the interview of Martha Lawson and Craig Robinson conducted for this report. The Irwin family lived on the property for 140 years, and they are among the many farmers and ranchers that made Santa Rosa what it is today.

The family itself, however, while being written up in local histories of the time, did not display the characteristics often associated with those significant in local history. The Irwins were active in the Baptist Church, sat on school boards, and belonged to the Native Sons of the Golden West. They did not, however, hold public office or otherwise serve in a leadership capacity in the community. Therefore, in contrast to the previous cultural resource survey conducted by EIP, this author concludes that the family is not significant with respect to Criteria 2.

3. *It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values.*

The 1898 Victorian-era Irwin farmhouse displays the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, and method of construction. It represents a typical Victorian farmhouse, which could alternatively display Gothic Revival, Italianate, Queen Anne, Stick, or any of the many influences to which Victorian-era structures responded. In this case, the farmhouse is quite simple in form and detailing, and displays the vertical emphasis and classical moldings and details indicative of Italianate influences.

The simplicity of the farmhouse is in keeping with the seemingly straight-forward business of the Irwin dairy farm. A departure is the quality of the moldings and woodwork, inside and out. It is also significant to its value today that the structure is largely intact and unmodified. Exceptions are the additions and upper vent on the rear, and the staircase on the interior, which looks like a later modification. The overall quality and simplicity of the structure, however, is a testament to past rural lifestyles in this area, which have nearly completely disappeared.

If the structure could not be retained in its current location, its integrity would be compromised by the alteration of its setting. This might be mitigated however if the structure was relocated to another location in the immediate area or in a similar area. For example, the farmhouse historically related not only to its immediate environment, but also to the larger landscape. The east-west creek behind the house was a feature of the farmstead, and its larger setting included the larger Taylor farm to the east.

If the structure was relocated in such a way that it still related to this larger setting, a relocation might prove more appropriate (it is this author's understanding that these two areas are to remain in public open space). Nonetheless, the possibility of relocation and rehabilitation of the structure would have to be confirmed by an assessment by qualified professionals (a structural engineer and/or a professional mover) of its ability to withstand such a move.

4. *It has yielded, or has the potential to yield, information important to the prehistory or history of the state or the nation.*

Typically this criteria has been applied to archaeological sites. An archaeological investigation of this site was not conducted in conjunction with this Assessment.

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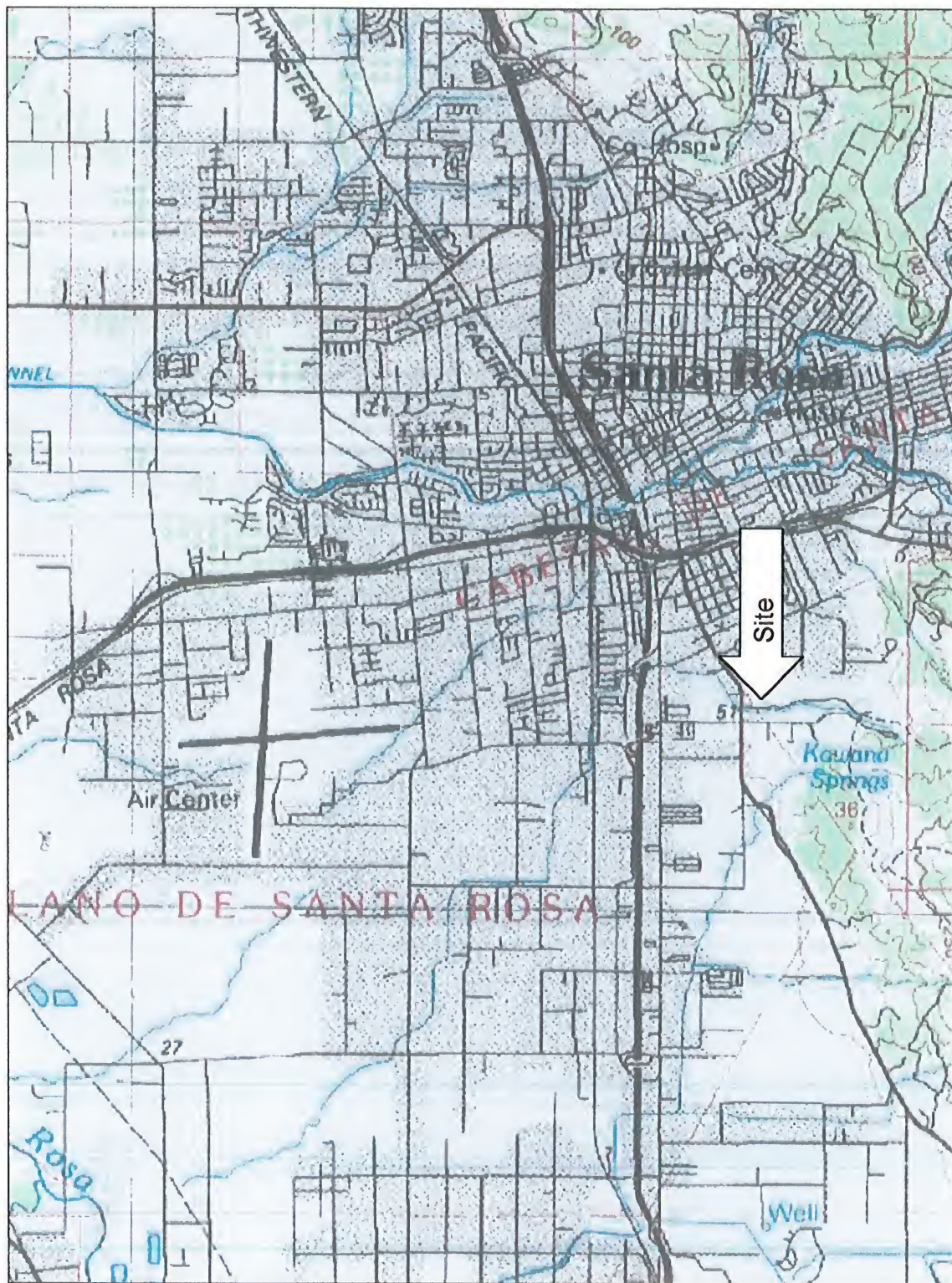


Figure 1: Property location map

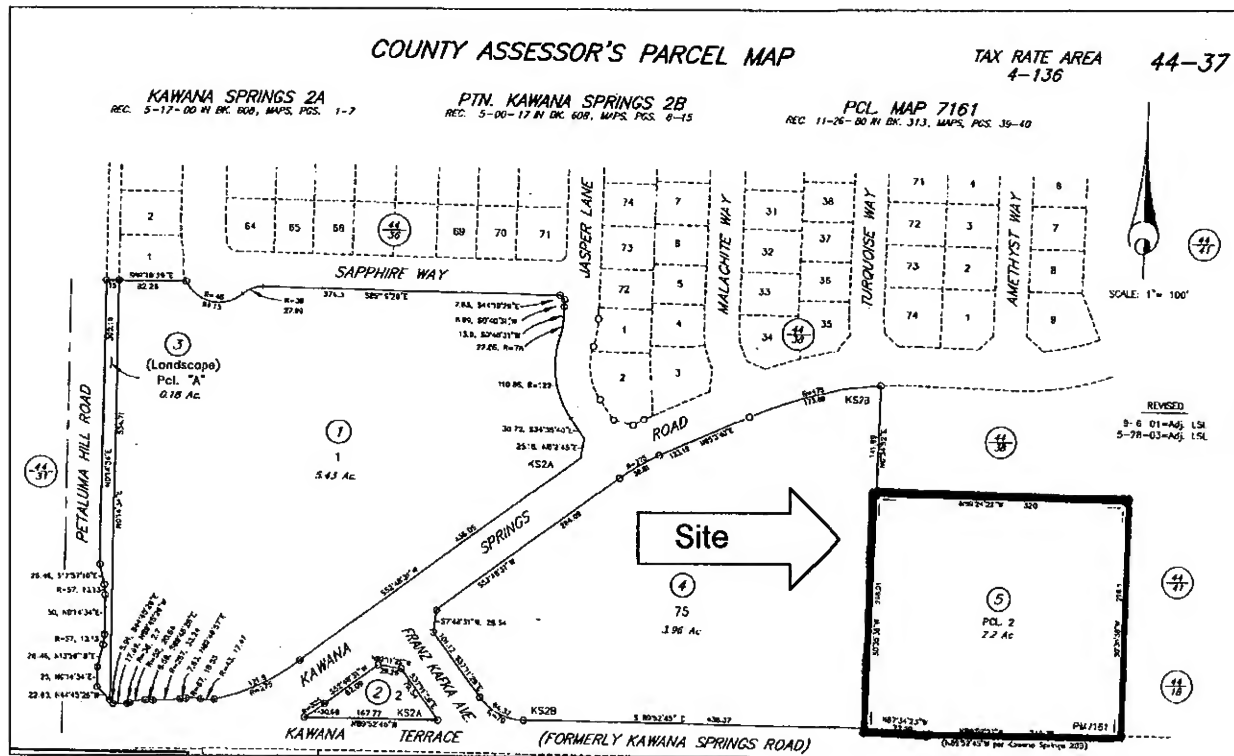


Figure 2: Parcel map

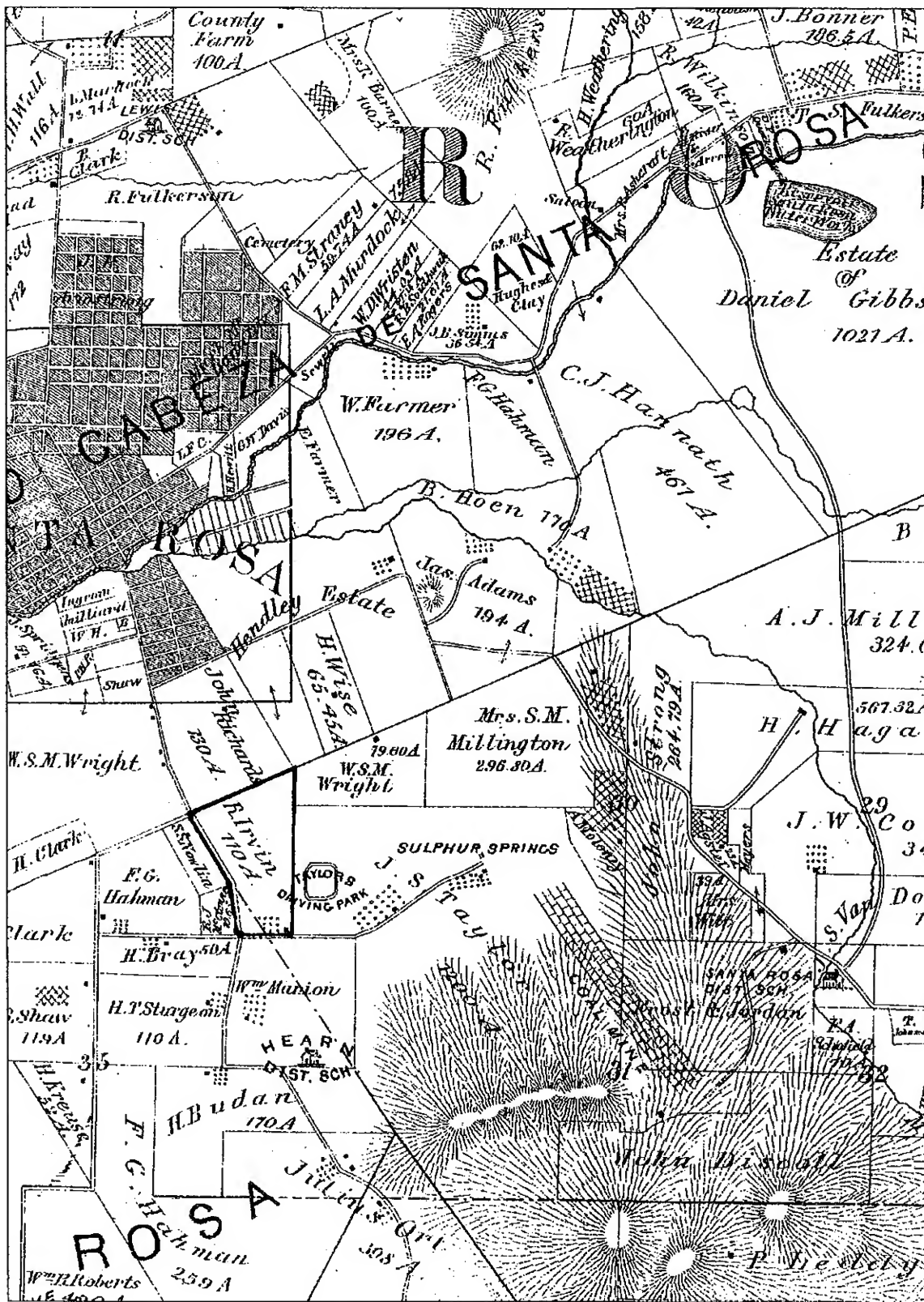


Figure 3: 1877 map showing Irwin land



Figure 4: Pre-1993 aerial photo showing outline of earlier Irwin property

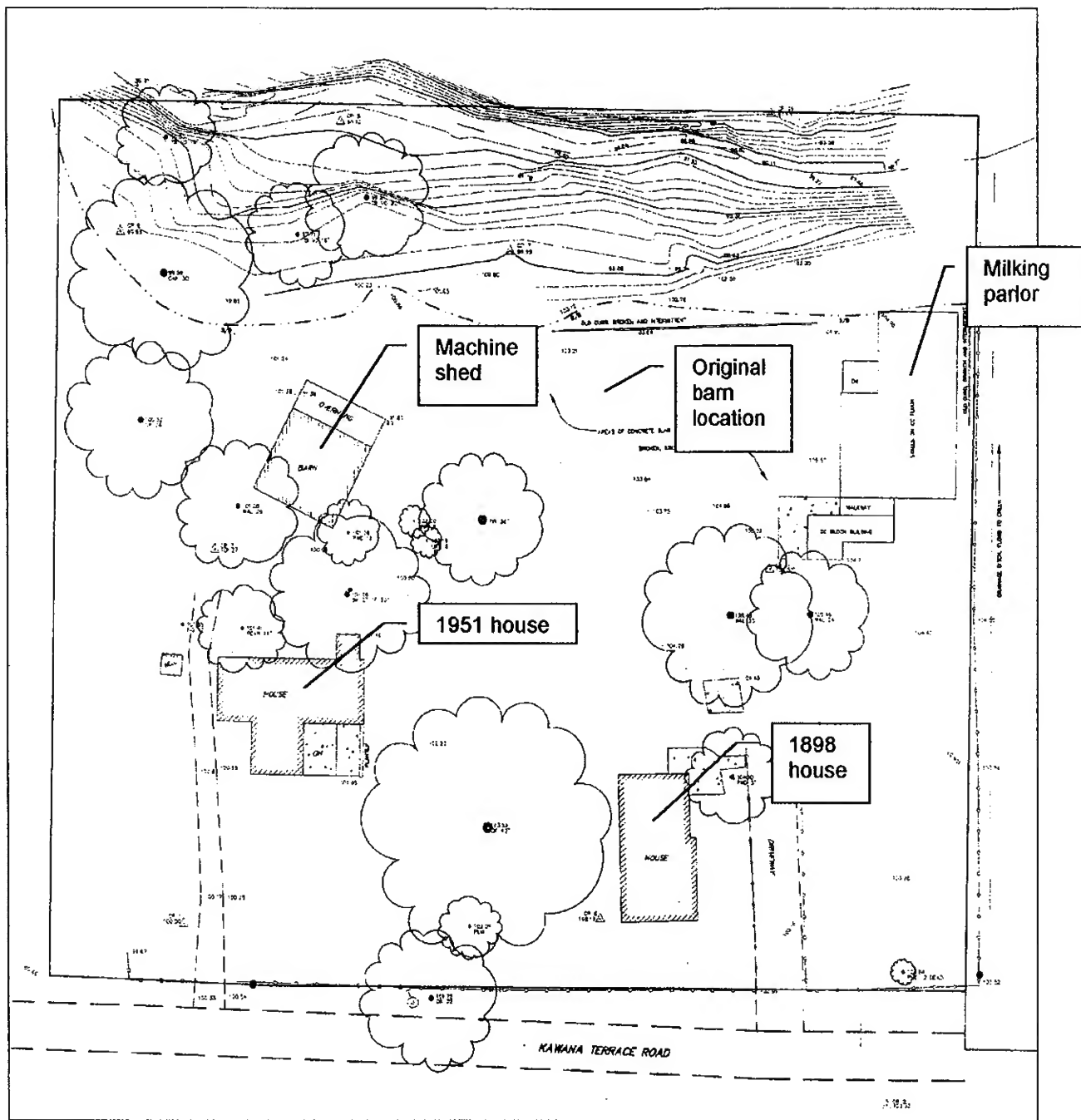


Figure 5: Site plan of Irwin Farmstead



Figure 6: 1898 farmhouse circa late 1960s



Figure 7: 1898 farmhouse viewed from southwest



East façade



West facade

Figure 8: 1898 farmhouse



Figure 9: Rear view of 1898 farmhouse



Paneled door



Brackets

Figure 10: Architectural details



View of house from Kawana Terrace Road



View of house from rear

Figure 11: Views of 1951 house



Close-up of milking parlor



View of milking parlor with barn foundation in foreground

Figure 12: Two views of milking parlor



View of shed from front



View of shed from rear

Figure 13: Views of machine shed



Entrance to chicken shed



View of dog run

Figure 14: Outbuildings on farm site



Figure 15: Watering trough



View of farm from east



View of barn foundation with development in background

Figure 16: Contextual views of farm